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Christian Funerals

## A. INTRODUCTION

The *ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS* is a rich source of theology and reflection. It is the pastoral responsibility of all who minister at the time of death to share its richness with those who mourn. Faith in eternal life becomes apparent as the hurt, confusion and mystery of death are shared by the faith community:

"The participation of the community in the funeral rite is a sign of the compassionate presence of Christ who... wept at the death of a friend, and endured the pain and separation of death in order to render it powerless over those he loves" (OCF, #239).

Two parallel journeys are envisioned: as the body is moved physically from the place of death to the funeral home, to the church, to its final resting place, the Church is invited to journey with the mourners as they are moved inwardly from an acknowledgment of the mystery of death to the realization of a new relationship with the deceased and with one another. The sequence of rites makes it possible for members of the faith community to mark critical moments on the journey of the mourners marked by appropriate prayer and the proclamation of faith.

## B. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### 1. Terminology of the Rite

#### a. *ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS*

**The only funeral ritual that must be used in Dioceses of the United States is the 1989 Edition of the *Order of Christian Funerals*, with the 1997 Appendix for Cremation.**

#### b. Proper terminology for these rites is as follows:

- 1) VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED  
(with RECEPTION AT THE CHURCH)
- 2) FUNERAL LITURGY  
FUNERAL LITURGY OUTSIDE MASS
- 3) RITE OF COMMITTAL  
(with FINAL COMMENDATION)

NOTE: Terms not in accord with the current rite are inappropriate. The term "Funeral Liturgy" includes both the "Funeral Mass and the Funeral Liturgy without Mass."

#### c. MASS FOR THE DEAD is the correct title for any celebration of the Eucharist for the deceased. It is not appropriate to use the title MASS OF RESURRECTION.

## 2. Recipients of Christian Burial

- a. All baptized Catholics and catechumens are to receive Christian burial unless they are expressly excluded from it by Church law. Whenever this involves a person who dies with questionable reputation or under unusual circumstances, necessary catechesis should be given to avoid scandal.
- b. Non-practicing Catholics may (and should) be given Christian burial at the request of the family.
- c. Normally in case of suicide, full Christian burial should be presumed since these deaths are, for the most part, considered the result of emotional or mental anxieties. (*See E-3*)
- d. In planning the Christian burial of those involved in invalid marriages, a distinction should be made between those who have tried to practice their faith to the fullest possible extent and those who have neglected it. In the first instance, upon the request of the spouse or family, the Funeral Mass should be offered. In the second instance, a Funeral Liturgy outside Mass may be held at the funeral home or church and, at a later date, Masses may be offered.

## 3. Denial of Christian Burial

- a. Unless they have given some signs of repentance before their death, the following are to be deprived of ecclesiastical funeral rites:
  - 1○ notorious apostates, heretics and schismatics;
  - 2○ persons who had chosen the cremation of their own bodies for reasons opposed to the Christian faith;
  - 3○ other manifest sinners for whom ecclesiastical funeral rites cannot be granted without public scandal to the faithful.

If some doubt should arise, the local ordinary is to be consulted; and his judgment is to be followed (Canon 1184 - §1, §2).

- b. Even though no public funeral rites are to be celebrated, priests may and should offer Masses for such persons. Also the parish funeral minister is permitted and encouraged to visit the funeral home of the deceased and to pray informally with the family and friends gathered there.

## 4. Time and Place of Ritual Celebration

### a. VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED

- 1) The format for the vigil or "wake" allows for a variety of options:
  - a) "Vigil for the Deceased" may take place in the home or at a funeral home.

- b) "Vigil for the Deceased with Reception of the Body" when the vigil is celebrated in the church. If this is the case, then the "Rite of Reception of the Body" is omitted as part of the funeral liturgy.
  - c) "Morning or Evening Prayer for the Dead" which may be preceded by the "Reception of the Body" or may lead into the procession to the place of committal.
- 2) The usual presider for the vigil is the parish priest. In his absence, a deacon may preside. In the absence of a deacon, a duly appointed lay minister may preside.
  - 3) The proclamation of God's compassionate love and mercy is the high point and central focus of the vigil (OCF, #59). It is for this reason that the rosary is not mentioned in the vigil options.

The praying of the rosary is also permitted by family, friends or community groups during the time of visitation. However, it is encouraged that the Vigil be the primary service.

b. FUNERAL LITURGY

- 1) "The funeral Mass is ordinarily celebrated in the parish church" (OCF, #155).

However, any member of the Christian faithful or those commissioned to arrange for his or her funeral may choose another church for the funeral rites with the consent of its rector and after informing the departed person's pastor (Canon 1177 - §2).

If death has occurred outside the person's own parish, and the corpse has not been transferred to that parish and another church has not been legitimately chosen for the funeral, the funeral rites are to be celebrated in the church of the parish where the death occurred unless another church has been designated by particular law (Canon 1177 - §3).

- 2) "The funeral Mass is to be scheduled at a time that will permit as many of the faith community as possible to be present (OCF, #11)."

**Funeral Masses may NOT be celebrated on the following days: Holy Thursday and the Triduum, and Holy Days of Obligation. In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, funerals are not to be celebrated on any Sunday.**

- 3) When the funeral liturgy outside Mass is celebrated before the committal, a Mass is to be scheduled, if possible, for the family and friends at a convenient time after the funeral.

c. RITE OF COMMITTAL

- 1) Whenever possible the Rite of Committal is celebrated beside the open grave or place of interment, rather than at a cemetery chapel (OCF, #204).
- 2) The "Rite of Committal with Final Commendation" takes place when final commendation does not take place during the funeral liturgy or when no funeral liturgy precedes the committal rite (OCF, #205).
- 3) It is recommended that military honors be offered after the conclusion of the Rite of Committal.

Choices for time and place of services are to be made jointly by the family and friends of the deceased in consultation with the persons who will direct the various funeral services: ministers of the Church, funeral directors and cemetery personnel.

**C. MINISTRY AND PARTICIPATION**

1. The ordinary minister of the funeral Mass is the priest. For the funeral liturgy outside Mass it is a priest or deacon.
2. The rubrics are written to direct the actions of the "minister." The order of that individual is specified only when a given task, is specified; e.g. the proclamation of the gospel, is associated with the order of deacon.
3. Competence and ability to represent the Church are the basic requirements for those who function as ministers of the Church.
4. Priests, deacons, funeral directors and other members of the faith community are challenged to work together as ministers of consolation.
5. Ultimately, the responsibility of consolation rests with the entire community: "The Church calls each member of Christ's body - priest, deacon and layperson - to participate in the ministry of consolation (OCF, #8)."
6. Respect for the diversity of roles of specific ministers is to complement the active participation of the entire community.
7. The funeral rites explicitly challenge pastors and others in leadership positions to instruct the parish community on the Christian meaning of death and on the purpose and significance of the Church's liturgical rites for the dead. The development of lay leadership and of bereavement teams in parishes is paramount if the rites are to be implemented appropriately.

8. The primary role of priests in the funeral rites is the celebration of the eucharist. In addition they must keep in mind that the time of death is a prime opportunity for reconciliation, evangelization and for the exercise of Christian charity and kindness. It is a time for sympathy and understanding, for sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others and for accommodating oneself as far as possible to the wishes of the bereaved family. Finally, it is a time for interaction and close cooperation with the funeral director who is often alert to special difficulties in particular situations (Introduction, #18, 23, 25).
9. It is crucial that mourners and the entire faith community be directed to active participation and prompted to personal prayer during the celebration of the funeral rituals.
10. Preparation and availability of appropriate worship aids which can enhance the full, active, conscious participation of the whole community is the responsibility of local parishes.

#### **D. PREPARATION OF THE RITUALS**

*Whenever possible, ministers should involve the family in planning the funeral rites: in the choice of texts and rites provided in the ritual, in the selection of music for the rites, and in the designation of liturgical ministers (OCF, #17).*

##### **1. General Catechesis**

The meaning and significance of the *ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS* is to be explained to the entire community before individual families are faced with the pain of loss and the mystery of death.

As part of the pastoral ministry...ministers should instruct the parish community on the Christian meaning of death, the significance of the Church's liturgical rites for the dead and the significance of the community's role in the ministry of consolation (OCF, #9).

The period before death is an appropriate time to plan the funeral rites with the person who is dying and members of the family if pastoral and personal considerations allow.

##### **2. Immediate Preparation**

Immediate planning of the vigil, the funeral liturgy and the rite of committal is to be done by a pastoral representative together with the family of the deceased and the local funeral director.

The number of ministers, sung responses and general liturgical practices for funeral liturgies is to follow as closely as possible the normal pattern for the parish Sunday liturgy.

3. Sharing by a Member of the Family

- a. The vigil, rather than the funeral liturgy, is the appropriate time for a member or friend of the family to speak in remembrance of the deceased. This time of sharing follows the Concluding Prayer of the Vigil or the Final Commendation at the Funeral Liturgy (OCF, #80). It is preferred that this take place at the Vigil rather than the Liturgy.
- b. This remembrance is NOT to be a eulogy, rather it should express appreciation for the life of the deceased or take the form of a prayer. Given the emotion of the moment and to ensure the words are in harmony with the celebration, any comments made should be put down in writing and reviewed by the presider. The speaker should limit his/her remarks to three to four minutes.

4. Specific Notes

- a. Color of Vestments  
The vestments proper for Mass are to be worn. The vestments may be white, purple or black based on the liturgical season.
- b. Introductory Rites  
The priest, accompanied by the ministers, may begin the rite at the entrance of the Church. However, these rites may take place in the front of the Church in order to enhance the participation of the whole assembly. After the prayer and sprinkling with holy water, a white pall is placed on the casket. If these rites take place at the church door, the priest venerates the altar and goes to his chair. The penitential act is omitted and the priest begins with the Collect. (OCF, #58).
- c. Placement Use of Pall  
The pall is itself a symbol. A reminder of the baptismal garment of the deceased, it is a sign of the Christian dignity of the deceased (OCF, #38).

After a brief introduction the presider invites the family to place the pall over the coffin in silence. This period of silence provides a time of reflection for the assembly and may even lead to a deepening of personal conversion.

- d. Homily  
A brief homily is given after the Gospel reading at the Funeral Liturgy and is strongly encouraged at the Vigil. The focus of the homily should be on the Paschal mystery of Christ. While a eulogy is forbidden, the preacher should help the assembly understand how the Paschal mystery of Christ can be seen in the life of the deceased and in their own lives. While speaking in terms of hope, the preacher should refrain from commenting on the will of God or the state of the deceased person's soul.
- e. Incensing the Body  
There is no option given for incensing the body of the deceased during the preparation of gifts. The liturgy of the eucharist is celebrated as usual (OCF, #168).  
  
The usual rite of incensing at this time consists in the incensation of the gifts, the altar, the celebrant(s) and the assembly. The purpose of this rite is to honor the gifts and the people who offer them.  
  
If incense is used during the funeral liturgy, the priest may incense the body of the deceased during the final commendation (OCF, #37).  
  
The coffin may be sprinkled with holy water or incensed during the final commendation or during or after the song of farewell. If the body was sprinkled with holy water during the rite of reception at the beginning of Mass, the sprinkling is ordinarily omitted in the rite of final commendation (OCF, #173).

## **E. ISSUES OF SPECIAL CONCERN**

- 1. Funeral Rites for Children
  - a. It is crucial that ministers examine the funeral rites for children given in Part II of the *ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS*. The special Introduction to this section is especially helpful (OCF, #234-42).  
  
The support of those within the community who have lost children is especially important to mourners.  
Those who lost children of their own are to be especially encouraged to support the bereaved in their struggle to accept the death of a child (OCF, #240).
  - b. Priests and deacons are granted the faculty to permit church funeral rites for children who have died before baptism, provided their parents had the intention to have them baptized. (OCF, #237). Such permission extends to the fetus or stillborn children (OCF, #318).

## 2. Cremation

- a. The celebration of the Church's funeral rites in the context of cremation is governed by the 1997 Appendix to the OCF. The Appendix makes it clear that while cremation is permitted, "it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body" (OCFA, #413). It is important to note that cremated remains are to "be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come" (OCFA, #417). Therefore, the cremated remains may not be scattered, subdivided, crafted into jewelry, pottery, or other objects, mixed with cremated remains of other individuals or pets, or kept at home. Cremated remains are to be buried or placed in a mausoleum or columbarium; burial at sea is also permitted as long as the cremated remains are placed in an appropriate container and not simply scattered.
- b. "The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites" (OCFA, #413). Therefore, if at all possible, cremations should take place after the Vigil and the Funeral Liturgy have been celebrated. At the Rite of Committal, the cremated remains are buried or entombed using the alternate wording (OCFA, #438).
- c. There may be occasions when the cremation of the body, and the committal of the remains, must precede the Funeral Liturgy. In those cases, the Funeral Liturgy takes place without the reception of the body and the final commendation; prayers that make reference to honoring or burying the body of the deceased are not used.
- d. Universal law does not allow for the celebration of the Funeral Liturgy in the presence of cremated remains. However, the United States enjoys an indult which allows individual bishops to judge if such a practice is appropriate in his diocese as long as cremation was not "inspired by motives contrary to Christian teaching" (OCFA, #426a). According to this indult, "each diocesan bishop will judge whether it is pastorally appropriate to celebrate" the Funeral Liturgy with cremated remains present, taking into account both the particular situation and the concrete norm of the Church (OCFA, #426b). **In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, a Funeral Liturgy with cremated remains is permitted.**
  - Cremated remains are to be in a worthy vessel; a small table or stand is prepared. The remains may be placed there before the liturgy or be carried in procession.
  - The vessel may be sprinkled with holy water, using the alternative words found in (OCFA, #433); the pall is not used. The Paschal Candle may be used.
  - The Rite of Committal is celebrated at the cemetery or columbarium and the alternate words of committal are used (OCFA, #438).

3. Suicide

Suicide is usually considered to be the result of emotional or mental anxiety and hence is accidental. Normally, full Christian burial is to be provided for such victims. No baptized Catholic, catechumen, and infant child of the same persons is to be denied Christian burial without prior consultation by the diocesan bishop.

In cases involving suicide, the full circumstances of the victim's life and the wishes of the family are primary issues when determining which of the rituals are to be celebrated.

Special prayers have been added to the ritual that are pastorally sensitive to the grieving family and friends of suicide victims (OCF, #398: 42-45).

4. Ecumenical Sensitivity

- a. Priests, when requested by the family of a deceased non-Catholic, may take part in the services at the funeral home, at the wake, and at grave side services in any cemetery.
- b. If invited, Catholic ministers may offer prayers, give readings, eulogies or reflections at a funeral in a non-Catholic church, but they may not participate in any aspect of a Eucharistic liturgy.
- c. If invited, ministers of other churches may offer prayers, give readings, or reflections at a funeral in a Catholic Church, but they may not participate in any aspect of the Eucharistic liturgy.
- d. Ministers of other churches may conduct a wake service or a graveside rite when a member of their congregation is interred in a Catholic cemetery, or when there is a special relationship to the deceased.

5. Monetary Considerations

a. Offerings for Mass Intentions

Family and friends may wish to make a monetary offering for the celebration of Holy Mass for the intention of the deceased at a local parish, mission, or religious house of their choice. Family members may then want to send thank you notes or acknowledgements.

b. Memorial Gifts

Guests may also wish to make a donation in memory of the deceased to an appropriate charity. It may be helpful for this information to be publicized for those who come to the visitation or Vigil.

- c. Honoraria  
The funeral home staff will usually assist the family in determining appropriate honoraria for those who assisted with the Funeral Liturgy, such as clergy, musicians, altar servers, etc.

## F. MUSIC IN THE FUNERAL LITURGY

### 1. PURPOSE OF GUIDELINES

When a member of the Body of Christ dies, the community is called to the ministry of consolation, which is rooted in our belief in the death and resurrection of Christ. We face the reality of death; we admit the anguish of grief and trust that the Risen Lord has power over sin and death. Death is not a finality; there is life in the Risen Lord (OCF, 8).

According to the *Order of Christian Funerals* (OCF), the community's principal involvement in the ministry of consolation is by active participation in the funeral rites (OCF, 11). The Church calls all members of the faith community to be of prayerful support, and provides three primary opportunities to do so: *the vigil, the funeral liturgy, and the rite of committal*. Liturgical celebration involves the whole person, requiring attention to all that affects the senses: music, ritual gestures, processions, postures, liturgical signs and symbols affirming Christian belief and hope.

These guidelines are offered to assist pastors and music directors in planning with the family of the deceased for the selection of appropriate music that will fully involve the faith community.

Music is integral to all Christian worship, including our funeral rites. It has the power to console, uplift, and unify as no other human expression. Well-chosen hymns and responses enable the mourners to participate more fully in the rites, thus unifying their prayerful support of the bereaved. The texts of songs chosen for a particular celebration should express the Paschal mystery of the Lord's suffering, death, and triumph and should be related to the readings from Scripture (OCF, 30-31). Music should be provided for the vigil and funeral liturgy and, whenever possible, for the processions and rite of committal. Instrumentalists, cantors, and choirs are encouraged to assist the assembly's full participation in the songs, responses, and acclamations of these rites (OCF, 32-33).

“Recorded music lacks the authenticity provided by a living liturgical assembly gathered for the Sacred Liturgy. . . it should not, as a general norm, be used within the Liturgy.” (STL, 93)  
Developing parish funeral choirs is encouraged. These choirs usually comprise individuals who can be available on weekday mornings and who gather to lend their collective voice in support of the assembly song, and to provide other choral selections. A printed program also may assist the assembly to fulfill its role. All music and lyrics printed in the program must have copyright permissions purchased and duly acknowledged.

## 2. MUSIC SELECTION

Funeral music should take into account the liturgical season. Easter provides an excellent time to make a connection between the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and our own dying and rising to eternal life. Selections during Advent may focus on our longing for the coming of the kingdom, and music during Lent can highlight God's merciful forgiveness.

Because of the importance of music in liturgy, *Sing to the Lord* (STL) recommends three criteria for planning so that the assembled faithful might participate fully, consciously, and actively in the rites:

- a. **Liturgical Judgment:** The texts of the music must be theologically sound, expressing the faith of the Church. For funeral liturgies, special care should be taken to choose texts that express a belief in resurrection and the Church's ministry of consolation and hope.
- b. **Pastoral Judgment:** Songs need to be within the capabilities of **this** assembly to sing and **these** musicians to play. The circumstances of the death of the parishioner also need to be considered. Music that reflects a sensitive, restrained yet faith-filled hope may be more in keeping with the pastoral circumstances than the exuberance of Easter exaltation
- c. **Musical Judgment:** Ritual music must be good music, able to carry the weight of the text or the emotion that it seeks to evoke. There should be an identifiable music structure and form in which the melody, harmony, and text complement each other.

Music should never be used to memorialize the deceased, but rather to give praise to the Lord, whose Paschal Sacrifice has freed us from the bonds of death (OCF, 249).

“Secular music, even though it may reflect on the background, character, and interests or personal preferences of the deceased or mourners, **it is not appropriate** for the Sacred Liturgy.” (STL, 246)

Prayerful silence is also an important element to the celebration of the funeral rites and should be respectfully regarded at all times (OCF, 34).

Music should center around praising God's mercy, commending the deceased to the care of the angels and the saints, and the dying and rising of Christ.

*See Appendix A for suggested music selections.*

## **Funeral Vigil (The Wake)**

### **INTRODUCTORY RITES**

**Greeting**

**Opening Song**

**Invitation to Prayer**

**Opening Prayer**

### **LITURGY OF THE WORD**

**First Reading**

**Responsorial Psalm**

**Gospel**

### **PRAYER OF INTERCESSION**

**Litany**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding prayer**

### **CONCLUDING RITE**

**Blessing**

The vigil may be held at the church or other facility, and may take the form of a Liturgy of the Word or of some part of the Office for the Dead. If the vigil takes place at the church, the reception of the body may begin the liturgy (see *Reception at the Church*, below). Whenever possible, a cantor, with or without an instrumentalist, should assist the assembly's participation. After the minister greets those present, the Vigil for the Deceased begins with a song, which should be familiar to the assembly, and express a profound belief in eternal life and the resurrection of the dead. The Liturgy of the Word begins with the opening prayer. A responsorial psalm should be sung after the reading. The litany (intercessory prayers) may be chanted or recited with a sung or spoken response, such "Lord, hear our prayer." The Lord's Prayer may be sung or spoken by all. After the blessing, a closing song, expressing belief in eternal life, may be sung, or the service may end in silence or with instrumental music (OCF, 68).

### ***Office for the Dead***

The celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours (Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer) may be used as the format for the vigil service, but may not be familiar to most assemblies. A participation aid for texts and music, and directions for posture and gesture would be helpful in assisting the assembly to pray. A sung celebration is in keeping with the nature of the prayer and is to be encouraged (OCF, 372). Depending on the time of day, Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer is celebrated. In Morning Prayer, themes of resurrection and light remind the community of Christ's victory over death. In Evening Prayer themes are of thanksgiving for the gift of life, and invoke Christ, the evening star and unconquerable light (OCF, 350 and 351).

### **Structure and Content of Morning and Evening Prayer:**

**Introductory Verse**

**Hymn**

**Psalmody**

**Reading**

**Responsory**

**Gospel Canticle**

**Intercessions**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding Prayer**

**Dismissal**

Preference be given to the singing of the hymn, psalmody, and gospel canticle. The introductory verse, responsory, intercessions, Lord's Prayer, and dismissal may also be sung. The hymn sets the tone of the prayer and choices of texts should mirror the themes stated above, or generally express belief in the Paschal Mystery. Psalms are sung whenever possible. The manner of singing may be antiphonal, responsorial, or sung through (OCF, 356). Usual texts for Morning Prayer include Psalms 51, 146, 150, a canticle from Isaiah or Daniel. Texts for Evening Prayer may include Psalm 121, 130, 141, and a New Testament canticle from the epistles. Following the reading, a short responsory or a responsorial song may be sung or recited. The Gospel canticle is then sung: the *Canticle of Zechariah (Benedictus)* in Morning Prayer, and the *Canticle of Mary (Magnificat)* in Evening Prayer. The intercessions and Lord's Prayer may be sung. A concluding prayer competes the Hour.

### **Funeral Mass**

#### **INTRODUCTORY RITES**

**Greeting**

**Sprinkling with Holy Water**

**Placing of the Pall**

**Entrance Procession**

**Placing of Christian Symbols**

**Opening Prayer**

#### **LITURGY OF THE WORD**

**First Reading**

**Responsorial Psalm**

**Second Reading**

**Gospel Acclamation**

**Gospel**

**Homily**

**General Intercessions**

#### **LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST (as usual)**

**(outside Mass, replace Liturgy of the Eucharist with Lord's Prayer)**

#### **FINAL COMMENDATION (may occur at Committal)**

**Invitation to prayer/silence**

**Signs and Song of Farewell**

### **Prayer of Commendation**

#### **Procession to the Place of Committal**

As at Sunday Eucharist, several parts of the celebration should always be sung, even if there is no other music. These are the psalm, Gospel acclamation, the Eucharistic acclamations (Holy, Holy, Holy; Mystery of Faith; Great Amen), and the Lamb of God. Ideally, these should be well known by the congregation, and may be the same that are used on Sundays.

#### ***Reception at the Church***

The reception of the body takes place at the entrance of the church at the beginning of the liturgy, unless it has already taken place at the vigil. The procession follows the sprinkling rite and the laying of the funeral pall. The procession should be accompanied by the song of the assembly, expressing its belief in the resurrection (OCF, 135). If the rite of reception was held previously, the Mass begins with the entrance song. The entrance song should be comforting and consoling. Use pastoral judgment as to whether or not it should be celebratory in nature. It should also be familiar since the family will not be carrying worship aids.

#### ***Liturgy of the Word***

After the first reading, the responsorial psalm is sung, with the assembly joining in the refrain. If it is not possible to sing the psalm, it should be recited, the response reflecting the poetic and musical nature of the prayer. The Gospel acclamation (alleluia or a Lenten acclamation) is always sung, or omitted if not sung. The intercessions are prayed after the homily, and may be chanted or recited. The assembly answers with a simple refrain, which may be sung even if the intercessions are recited.

#### ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

A song may accompany the procession of gifts and preparation of gifts and altar, and. The musical text should reflect the Church's belief in the resurrection, or pray for the Spirit's blessing on the gifts. The Eucharistic Acclamations should be sung. During the Communion Rite, the assembly may sing the Lord's Prayer, its doxology, the Lamb of God, and a song for the Communion procession. Because this part of the liturgy belongs especially to the people, solo singing is not recommended. If a solo has been requested by the family, the appropriate time would be after everyone has received Communion and is meditating in silence.

#### ***Final Commendation and Farewell***

Unless it is to be celebrated at the place of committal, the final commendation follows the Prayer after Communion. After the invitation to prayer, followed by a period of time for all to pray in silence, the song of farewell is sung during the sprinkling and incensing of the body. The song should affirm hope and trust in the paschal mystery, and should be a melody simple enough for all to sing. It may be in the form of a responsory or a hymn. Since the singing is the ritual, the entire text should be sung.

#### ***Procession to the Place of Committal***

Following the prayer of commendation, the deacon or priest invites those present to join the procession to the place of committal. A version of *In Paradisum* (May the Angels Lead You into Paradise) may accompany the funeral procession out of the church. One or more of the psalms provided by the rite may be sung during the procession. If convenient, singing may continue during the journey to the place of committal. Psalms particularly appropriate for this procession are numbers 25, 42, 93, 116, 118, and 119 (OCF, 228).

## **Rite of Committal**

**Invitation**

**Scripture Verse**

**Prayer over the place of committal**

**Committal**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding Prayer**

**Prayer over the people/dismissal**

The Rite of Committal is the conclusion of the funeral rite and is celebrated at the grave, tomb, mausoleum, or crematorium. The rite begins with an invitation to prayer and is followed by a Scripture verse, a prayer over the place of committal, intercessions, the Lord's Prayer (sung or recited by all), a concluding prayer, and finally a prayer over the people. If the Rite with Final Commendation is used, the song of farewell should be sung whenever possible. In either form, the rite concludes with a song, which should affirm hope in God's mercy and in the resurrection of the dead (OCF, 214).

### **Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass**

For a funeral liturgy outside Mass, preference should be given to the singing of the opening song, responsorial psalm, gospel acclamation, and especially the song of farewell (OCF, 181). The same guidelines apply for the musical elements in this rite as in the funeral liturgy within Mass.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

At the death of a loved one, family members of the deceased are overwhelmed. Many decisions must be made within a short period of time. Music directors are encouraged to facilitate music selection for the bereaved by creating a list of appropriate songs and choral music already familiar to the church musicians and choir. Liturgical music companies publish volumes of music specifically for funerals, and most hymnals have a section devoted to music for funerals.

### **REFERENCES**

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